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How TITLE SOURCE II Changed the Way North Las Vegas Library District Does Acquisitions - And Other Functions

by **Marylou Hale** (Head of Adult Services and Acquisitions, North Las Vegas Library District, 2300 Civic Center Dr., North Las Vegas, NV 89030) <hmhale@worldnet.att.net>

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***Column Editor's Note:** Technology clearly can improve the efficiency of library acquisitions. Yet electronic ordering systems often bring additional, unanticipated benefits - and changes - to library organizations. These benefits and changes appear vividly through case studies of how systems are implemented in local library contexts. In this month's column, **Marylou Hale**, Head of Adult Services and Acquisitions at North Las Vegas Library District, provides an enlightening case study of the impact of an online acquisitions system on a busy public library. — RR*

This article provides a case study, in a public library context, of a widely used online ordering system, **Baker and Taylor's Title Source II** on the Web (TSII).¹ Having used no less than seven online ordering systems in the course of a career, the author acknowledges that other vendors provide excellent online ordering systems.² Please check with a specific vendor regarding the services they provide.

The Setting: North Las Vegas Library District

North Las Vegas Library District lies within the boundaries of the city of North Las Vegas in Clark County, Nevada. The population within the city limits is just over 100,000. The library primarily serves the residents of North Las Vegas. The District participates in a county-wide sharing of resources, and all county residents are granted privileges at the library. The Library District consists of one main library located in the older downtown section. Because the northwest section of the city is booming, talks continue about opening a second branch in that area. The circulation is just under 100,000 and the holdings are approximately 100,000. The book budget is \$120,000, but occasional state grants have added to this amount.

The staff consists of a director and assistant director, four librarians, one Family Services associate, five paraprofessionals, and two part-time staff. The Library has three departments: Circulation which is also responsible for processing, Family Services which is responsible for children's collection development and programs, and Adult Services which does everything else including

adult public services, acquisitions, cataloging, reference, systems, ILL, collection development, standing orders, etc. No one staff person is assigned to acquisitions or processing as a primary duty. In fact, cataloging is the only technical services function with exclusively-designated staff; cataloging is the primary duty of two paraprofessionals.

Use of the library is growing: the circulation is rising, the number of reference questions is rising, and number of people through the doors is rising. Although the OPAC and circulation system are automated, the technical services functions are not. The prospect of a second branch plus the addition of state grants to purchase more materials recently put pressure on the Library District to find a more efficient and effective method of ordering and tracking materials.

Library Procedures Prior to 1999

Before **Baker and Taylor** introduced TSII, the North Las Vegas Library District used **Baker and Taylor's** predecessor electronic product: an ordering system with access through a modem. Here is how our acquisitions procedures worked: Everyone on the library staff selected items from book reviews. Two persons — the catalogers mentioned above - received reviews for titles to be selected. The catalogers were responsible for providing bibliographic verification and holdings information; ordering titles with the **Baker and Taylor** software; and receiving the ordered materials. The catalogers carefully wrote paper slips for each order listing title, author, ISBN, publisher, and price, plus additional information such as requester, reviews, and notes. These slips were filed until the order was received. When books arrived, order slips were pulled and sent with the books to the Technical Services area.

The **Baker & Taylor** electronic system allowed quick and easy bibliographic verification of titles, and rapid order placement. This system truly boosted the library's selection and acquisitions functions.

This acquisitions arrangement had two significant flaws, however: duplicate orders, and no means to create reports. Duplication arose from several gaps in the system. First, once a book arrived and the order slips were pulled, no trail existed for tracking orders

other than the invoices. Between the received date and the cataloged date, the items were in limbo. Reference librarians didn't know if items had been ordered unless they went to the processing area and looked through the backlog, or pulled all the invoices and plowed through them line-by-line. The paper order file was kept in the Technical Services area, so selectors had to leave the reference desk to examine it. Moreover, **Baker & Taylor's** electronic system neither tracked orders, nor linked its bibliographic database to order information. The online system thus lacked safeguards against duplication.

Further, logistical problems developed when the library got a fax machine that shared a telephone line with the modem. When the duel played out, the fax machine always won. The person ordering on the modem would be kicked off midstream without knowing if the order had been completed. Unfortunately many duplicate orders were submitted because of this problem. What was originally a revolutionary way of placing orders became unreliable, because it consumed inordinate amounts of staff time to correct errors, and had a high risk of undetected duplicates.

Another shortcoming of this electronic system was its inability to generate reports. In FY1998, the Library District received a state grant for about \$40,000 for collection enhancements. At the end of FY1998, the grantor wanted a report on the materials ordered with the total amount spent in each subject area. The head of Adult Services spent many days tracking purchases through invoices, catalog entries, and actual items. Six weeks were needed to complete a report that could have been finished in less than one day, were the needed information accessible electronically.

A Procedural Innovation in FY1999

In the next fiscal year, through the generosity of the state of Nevada and LSTA funds, the library added more computers, which allowed Internet access at all staff workstations. Because of the inadequate tracking system described above, the Library District started to record all orders on a spreadsheet that was accessible to all employees. The spreadsheet worked for tracking titles on order and in Technical Services, but proved to be a real

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time-muncher and disk hog. It maxed out the slow computers and touchy network. Near the end of FY1999, the report for the grantors took less than two hours to complete, but the spreadsheet took over ten minutes to load. This was another good idea that had gone bad.

Then Comes TSII:

In the fall of 1999, Baker and Taylor introduced the Web-based **Title Source II (TSII)**. TSII featured a bibliographic database of more than 2 million titles, online ordering, and the ability to download MARC bibliographic records into the local catalog. The library initially considered TSII a bit pricey at \$1750 for the setup and first login and \$250 for each subsequent login. The **North Las Vegas Library District** started with one login and assigned it to Technical Services, which now consisted of the two aforementioned catalogers and the head of Adult Services.

TSII offered much more than just an ordering system. TSII provided a method for the head of Adult Services to verify bibliographic information and order items, and for the catalogers to download MARC records for the local catalog. Because this was an Internet-based system, the head of Adult Services could do bibliographic searching and ordering during the slow times at the Reference Desk, an impossible task during the modem days. Although TSII proved to be effective in these areas, the tracking of orders in-house was still done on paper cards and spreadsheets. Nonetheless, the ease of use for ordering and the convenience of MARC records convinced the **Library District** to become more familiar with TSII.

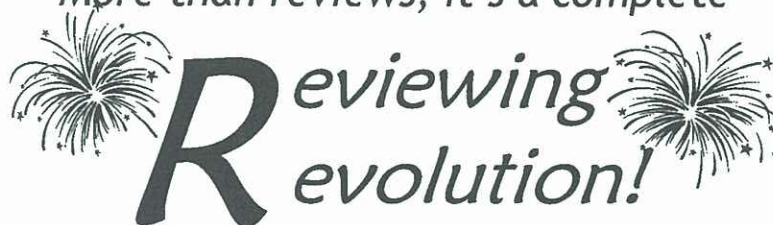
Learning More About TSII in FY2001

By early FY2001, the library discovered even more uses for TSII. In particular, the reference librarians discovered that TSII facilitated complicated searches that would otherwise be impossible to do by hand. For instance, **North Las Vegas Library District** wanted to increase its holdings in popular English videos. However, these videos fell within strict criteria: feature films costing under \$20.00, published between July 1, 2000 and December 31, 2000, and which were available now. TSII allowed retrieval of titles to meet these criteria. Another request was for western, mystery or nonfiction paperbacks that were currently available and would total \$500.00. TSII made it possible to find titles on popular subjects by keyword. An added benefit was that TSII listed review sources and reviews.

Suddenly one TSII login wasn't enough. Technical Services personnel were using TSII for ordering and downloading MARC records. Public Services personnel — the head of Adult Services, two reference librarians, one Family Services associate and the head of Family Services — were using TSII for collection development. A second login was added for

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Public Services, and Technical Services regained exclusive use of the original login.

About this time, the **District** discovered that TSII would perform duplicate checking on previous orders if the orders were left on the system. In FY2000, Technical Services deleted the orders as soon as they were placed. In FY2001, the orders were left on the TSII system. Using this feature, the **North Las Vegas Library District** has almost eliminated duplicate orders. In addition, the order information can be downloaded to make replicas of the paper order cards that were laboriously written in times past. The elimination of duplicate orders and the ability to download orders into a format used by Technical Services have been perhaps the greatest benefits of TSII.

A third benefit of TSII was that the **District** could download order information, including the subject and price, into a spreadsheet, to keep a running inventory of exactly what has been purchased, without having to track elusive items or invoices. By formatting just a few lines, library personnel can use this order information to generate reports that are sufficient for grantors.

TSII has also made collection development easier. The database posts reviews, allows keyword searching by subject, has the ability to refine searches through the use of filters, and provides immediate order status information.

The **District** has found only two prob-

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lems with TSII. First, the system tends to be click intensive. That is, operations usually require several mouse clicks. Over the course of the workday, this feature can become downright annoying, especially if the Internet is running slowly. Further, the current version of TSII does not allow defaults to be set prior to each ordering session, such as for the number of items to be ordered or the addition of notes. Currently these data elements must be re-entered with each order.

Impact on Organization, Outlook for Future

All four librarians — the Head of Adult Services, the Head of Family Services and the two reference librarians — the Family Services associate, the assistant director, and the catalogers are using TSII as a collection development or a bibliographic information and verification tool. TSII did cause one significant change in acquisitions procedures: now the head of Adult Services is the sole person to enter orders. Because the TSII ordering function is so very simple to use, and makes possible the expenditure of large sums of money quickly, the head of Adult Service has become the clearinghouse for all orders so

that fiscal responsibility can be maintained. TSII has also improved reference service: reference librarians use TSII for bibliographic verification, and to identify new materials on subjects of interest to patrons. The staff has fully embraced TSII because of the ease of use, the information provided, and the availability of the system from any Internet computer. TSII's Internet access will be especially valuable when the library's new branch opens. TSII has not led to other changes in the library's organizational structure or procedures, however.

Evaluation

With any new product, evaluation is critical to continuation of service, and the benefits of the new system should outweigh the costs. In 1995, Lynne Branche Brown (p. 87-88) listed six points used to evaluate vendor services. Using her six-question schedule, the library has drawn the following conclusions about TSII:

1. How much business is done with the vendor? In the case of the North Las Vegas Library District, more than 75% of the business is done exclusively with Baker and Taylor. GRADE = A.

2. How intuitive is the system? The ease of use is one of the selling points, but mastering the system takes more skill. GRADE = B+.

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Endnotes

1. For a more thorough introduction to TSII, see <http://ts2b.informata.com/TS2/> and click on "Product Info."
2. Many public library jobbers provide electronic acquisitions services. The following is a partial list of public library jobbers, besides Baker & Taylor, providing these services, based on the information available to us at press-time: The Book House's order database, Web ordering, and electronic ordering (<http://www.thebookhouse.com/>); Book Wholesalers Inc.'s TitleTales and electronic ordering (<http://www.bwbooks.com/>); Brodart's ROSE group of services (<http://www.brodart.com/books/elecorder.htm>); Coutts Library Services' COLA and e-ordering (<http://www.coutts-ls.com/>); Eastern Book Company's online ordering (<http://www.ebc.com/>); Emery-Pratt's E-PAS and e-ordering (<http://www.emery-pratt.com/>); Ingram Library Services' "iPage" and electronic ordering (http://www.ingramlibrary.com/prog_svcs/Default.asp); and Regent Book Company's online catalog and e-ordering (<http://www.regentbook.com/>). We apologize in advance if we have inadvertently overlooked a public library vendor providing these services. We did not list vendors that primarily cater to non-public libraries. Please contact your vendor directly to learn more about the electronic acquisitions services they offer.

References

Brown, Lynne Branche. (1995) "Integrating Vendor Systems into Acquisitions Workflow," in *New Automation Technology for Acquisition and Collection Development*, edited by Rosann Bazirjian. New York: Haworth Press, 83-88.

Book Pricing Update – Mid-year Prices

by Tom Loughran (Manager, Approval Department, Blackwell's Book Services, 6024 S.W. Jean Rd., Bldg. G, Lake Oswego, OR 97035; Ph: 877-270-4338) <tom.loughran@blackwell.com> www.blackwell.com

As many of you know, Blackwell's publishes an annual **Approval Program Coverage and Cost Study**. Last year was no exception, and in July we reported that the average list price of an academic monograph was \$61.55. Over the following six months (through December 31, 2000), the list price of the "average" academic monograph rose to \$61.99, or slightly less than one percent.

Although overall inflation has been low, its effect on prices has not been equal on titles originating in different parts of the world. As the following table shows, the US, Great Britain, and the rest of the world have shown markedly different trends in the list prices of new scholarly books. (The numbers in parentheses refer to the year ending June 30, 2000):

| Country of origin | Avg. list price |
|-------------------|-------------------|
| US origin | \$54.22 (\$52.29) |
| UK origin | \$64.82 (\$67.00) |
| Other origin | \$90.64 (\$91.02) |

The price of the average US origin title rose approximately 4%, while the price of titles originating in the UK actu-


ally declined 3%. The price of titles originating from all other countries declined.

To help explain this divergence in pricing trends, it is instructive to look at how the US dollar performed during this period. On January 1, 2000, the exchange rate for the British pound stood at .618 to the dollar; the Dutch guilder stood at 2.2 to the dollar, and the German mark stood at 1.94 to the dollar. Exactly one year later, the rates for these three currencies stood at .669 for the pound (almost an 8% decrease), 2.34 for the guilder (a drop of 6%) and 2.07 for the mark (or, a drop of 7%).

Only rarely does the rate of inflation in US publishing move in tandem with rates in the UK and other countries. In 1996, for example, the overall rate of inflation in scholarly book publishing over 1995 prices was 1.2%. But contained within that overall small increase were a rise of .7% in US titles, a drop of 1.9% in the price of UK titles and a substantial rise of 9.6% in titles published elsewhere. Had the dollar not enjoyed a pe-

riod of strength relative to other world currencies, it is safe to assume that the overall rate of inflation in book prices would have been higher.

Finally, let's take a look at the prices of that mainstay of scholarly publishing, the University Press book. The average price of a University Press title treated on approval during the one-year period July 1999 through June 2000 (excluding reprints) was \$49.76. For the six-month period ending on December 31, 2000, the average price of a University Press book (again, excluding reprints) was \$49.46—or, a modest decrease of almost six-tenths of one per cent in the most recent period.

How your book budget will stand up to inflation over the next year will be influenced by several factors. Among them are: the overall rate of inflation in the US publishing industry; the countries of original publication represented in the unique mix of titles that make up your library collection, and the US dollar's strength relative to those countries' currencies. 





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3. How reliable is the vendor overall? Baker and Taylor is very reliable. The Company is providing us with a three-to-four day turnaround for items ordered on TSII, unmatched by any other vendor used by the Library District. GRADE = A.

4. Does the vendor charge a fee for access to the system? The fee, at the time of this writing, is \$1750 for account set-up and the first login, and \$250 for each additional login. This is just a bit steep. GRADE = C.

5. Does the vendor provide alternative methods of access? This is irrelevant because TSII is Internet-based. GRADE = not applicable.

6. Is the hardware available? Consistently slow Internet connections would make this system taxing on staff. However, with the upgrade of the network at the North Las Vegas Library District in the beginning of FY2000, speed is not usually a problem. GRADE = B+.

Subscribing to TSII has been one of the best technological investments the Library District has ever made. The convenience, accuracy, and speed of delivery of TSII far outweigh the cost. 

Issues in Vendor/Library Relations — Report on the OhioLINK-YBP Relationship:

Serendipitous Advantages of Buying Monographs as a Consortium

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by **David Swords** (Director Consortia Market Development, YBP Library Services)

It is becoming common for vendors to grouse about library consortia as buying clubs whose effect will be to put us out of business. And surely, many consortia exist only to improve discounts for their members. On the other hand, we now see that consortia are like cholesterol: some are bad but others are extremely good.

When YBP became the monographs vendor for OhioLINK more than two years ago, we were nervous about the discounts and service requirements. As it turns out, however, the contract has been good for us, good, we think, for the consortium and for individual libraries, good for a spirit of partnership, and good for experiments in cooperative collection.

Why so good? OhioLINK achieved excellent discounts and favorable terms for its members, of course. By and large, for individual libraries, the direct savings through discounts are significant, and across the consortium, the direct savings have been considerable. Before the OhioLINK contract YBP was principal monographs vendor to a handful of schools in Ohio. Now, because of the contract, we are the major vendor to every large university in the State, save one, and to a total of more than sixty libraries. Without the consortial contract we might never have gained so many customers.

The advantages, however, go deeper than

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